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**THE USE OF CHIASTIC CONFIGURATIONS AS  
A SATIRICAL TOOL IN SELECTED WORKS BY  
PIETER-DIRK UYS**

by

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## S U M M A R Y

The focus of this thesis is Pieter-Dirk Uys's use of the rhetorical trope chiasmus as a satirical tool, an aspect of his work that has, to date, received little attention. The multiple nuances of 'chiasmus' are examined, pointing to the performer/persona relationship in terms of ' "I" create Image; Image makes "I" ' (Breytenbach, 1985) and the related 'semiotic richness of stage sign-vehicles' (Elam, 1980). The primarily semiotic analyses of chiasmic configurations are supported by close textual analyses throughout.

Pieter-Dirk Uys's chiasmic admix of his satirical pleasure/pain principle (entertainment/censure) is analysed in one newspaper article, one prose work and two revues. Uys's satire is contextualised against the background of the development of satire. The inherently chiasmic mode of satire and various techniques and writing styles are explored. Contemporary society lacks definitive moral, social and political norms, and the study attempts to show how Uys entertains by decoding 'the absurdities of contemporary reality' (Fletcher, 1987:ix) as a response to the amorphous experience of living in South African society from the early 1980s until 2001.

Uys's use of female characters to articulate his dissatisfaction with South Africa's socio-political climate during the last quarter of the twentieth century is explored in a selection of three plays, four prose works and ten revues. The focus falls on his creation of female personae, particularly the sustained portrayal of his popular persona, Evita Bezuidenhout. Uys's use of 'real' and 'false disguise' (Baker, 1994) is discussed. The transvestite persona's roles of both an 'intervener' who challenges the *status quo* and alerts the public to 'cultural, social or aesthetic dissonance' and an 'interventor' or 'enabling fantasy' (Garber, 1992:6) are considered.

The focus then shifts to Uys's deployment of various non-verbal sign-vehicles in his dramatic productions. Non-verbal and verbal signs are jointly responsible for the production of meaning in the theatre. Because 'theatrical signs ... acquire qualities ...

that they do not have in real life' (Bogatyrev, 1938:35-6), audiences must utilise 'theatrical competence' (Elam, 1980:87). A study of electronic recordings of eight revues reveals that Uys's non-verbal signs are as chiasmic as his verbal ones.

Uys's perpetuation of the Evita 'myth' as/or 'legend' is traced from her beginnings as a newspaper 'voice', to popular theatre and television personality, to the recipient of prestigious awards. Evita's current and possible future roles are considered. Uys's fabrication of Evita's family and her 'biography' is also examined as contributory to the legend, exploring Evita's metamorphosis from a housewife to a political figurehead who conflates fictional and real life exploits with South African politicians – a strategy through which Uys appears to align himself with current feminist issues. The slippage between fact and fiction has interesting consequences for Uys's level of control over his Evita persona, who seems occasionally to control him.

This thesis concludes with a review of the aims and rationale of the study, providing a broad synopsis of the main findings and looking at its limitations. Finally, it suggests possible areas for further research.

## KEYWORDS

Pieter-Dirk Uys	satire	semiotics
Evita Bezuidenhout	legend	<i>imago</i>
chiasmus	transvestite	female-impersonator
chiasmic configurations	myth	mask